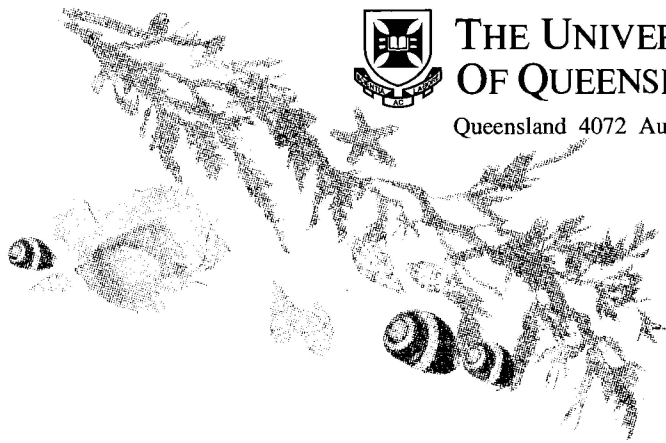




The Year in Review

1995 has been an exciting year for computing and communications at the Prentice Centre.

The Silicon Graphics Supercomputer was installed, providing University researchers with currently the most powerful high performance computing system in Australia.

Various network infrastructures and links were upgraded to improve speed and reliability of computer connections and service to our clients and colleagues. The number of network and resource accounts tripled this year, growing from 3000 to 9000, modems were increased from 40 to 200, and the residential colleges are now all connected to the network via optical fibre.

In an area of substantial growth and rapid changes in technology there have been some problems. With thousands of University personal computers and a growing number of Local Area Networks (LANs) it became clear that one central service could not provide for all. Hence the introduction, on an informal basis, of the Departmental Liaison Officer (DLO) concept—computing outreach. There are now 100 DLOs aligned with Prentice, participating



Alan Coulter — Director

eagerly in meetings and the DLO email discussion list. A formal structure will be required which should recognise the resources needed in departments for DLOs to provide a satisfactory client service.

The Prentice Centre has recognised the need to ensure future operation stands up to the test of formal quality assurance (QA). During 1995 the Centre was involved with the other Universities in a pilot QA benchmarking project on best practice within Australian University Information Technologies departments. A priority for the Centre in 1996 will be to seek formal QA evaluation.

I would like to acknowledge the cooperation and assistance from the wide range of Prentice Clients, to thank you for your support and to apologise to those where on occasions our efforts fell short of desirable standards. I also value this opportunity to thank the staff of the Prentice Centre for their dedication and hard work. I wish everyone a happy festive season and all the best for the coming year.

Alan Coulter

Hackers don't take holidays

Intruder activity is likely to increase over the Christmas break, warned Danny Smith, operational manager of AUSCERT.

Speaking at the November Departmental Liaison Officers' (DLOs) meeting, Danny said steps should be taken now to secure computer systems.

"The ethernet network in particular is targeted by hackers when they break into computer systems," Danny said.

"This network allows the interception of anything transmitted on the local segment. Hackers can also modify the computer system to allow themselves and others easy access in the future. Some protection mechanisms are available, but careful system administration is the best defence against this attack."

In Queensland, there has been a recent increase in hacking activity. In early November several intruders installed 'packet sniffers' on some computer networks. Packet sniffers can be used to assist intruders to break into servers and workstations. These programs grab the first bits of information being transmitted in newly-opened connections. This is usually the username and the password. Packet sniffers are hard to detect as varying methods have been used in different incidents to hide their presence.

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An arrest has now been made after the recent spate of attacks so intruder activity has declined, but it is expected to pick up again during the holidays when computer networks are not monitored daily.

To reduce the risk over the Christmas break, each system should be checked to ensure it is as secure as possible.

AUSCERT has prepared a Unix Security Checklist which

can be retrieved using ftp from: ftp://ftp.auscert.org.au/pub/auscert/papers/unix_security_checklist_1.0

The installation of a 'firewall' and extra port filtering will also help with the system's own security.

The Prentice Centre can assist with computer network security audits and advice. Contact Client Service on X54400.



Danny Thomas from VTHRC and CMCB, Don Burgess from Social Work, and Dr Micheal Strasser from Botany and the CRC for Tropical Plant Pathology discuss computing concerns at the November DLO meeting.

Colleges Network

Residents of the University of Queensland's Colleges can now access the Internet and other computer based services without leaving the college.

The University of Queensland has extended its fibre optic cable network to include the ten residential colleges on the St Lucia Campus. This project involved laying approximately 2.5 kilometres of cable and one kilometre of new conduit at a cost close to \$250,000.

Leading the way, the expanded network at the University of Queensland will improve student access to computer based research material. Two colleges have installed ethernet connections in every room so students can simply connect their own computers.

Thirty-seven kilometres of optic fibre cable trunks now span the campus and can carry video signals, multimedia presentations as well as computer data.

Funding was provided primarily by Quality Grant monies and the Colleges. The Prentice Centre and Buildings and Grounds supplied professional services in co-ordination and design and carried out the work.

Christmas Computer Shopping

Sales staff from the Technology Shop will demonstrate recent releases of software and hardware for both Macintosh and PC Platforms at the forthcoming Technology Update.

The Technology Shop's dynamic duo, Stephen Atherton, the Macintosh consultant, and Charlie Sutton, the PC specialist, promise something for everyone with value-for-money deals.

Topics and presentations will include (among others):

- Virtual Reality technologies— interactive, navigable, three-dimensional, graphical models will be demonstrated.
- Video conferencing— with a look at both PC and Macintosh solutions.
- Windows 95—a debate on the relative merits. Does it live up to the hype?
- New PC and Macintosh products including Zip drive and new CD mastering hardware.
- An overview of the 1995 MacExpo in Sydney.

Come along and increase your understanding of the current computing technology available. Help yourself make informed and objective computing decisions.

The presentation will be held on 11th December from 12 noon to 3pm in room 305 of the Skerman Building. All are welcome.

Refreshments served. Christmas giveaways. Don't miss it!

WWW Sites of Interest

GNN's annual Best of Net Awards:

<http://gnn-e2a.gnn.com/>

ABC: <http://www.abc.com.au/>

Encyclopedia Britannica Online: <http://www.eb.com/>

World Wide Web Robots, Wanderers, and Spiders
<http://web.nexor.co.uk/mak/doc/robots/robots.html>

Wild Ties: <http://branch.com/wildties/home.htm>

Internet Movie Database:

<http://ballet.cit.gu.edu.au/Movies/>

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